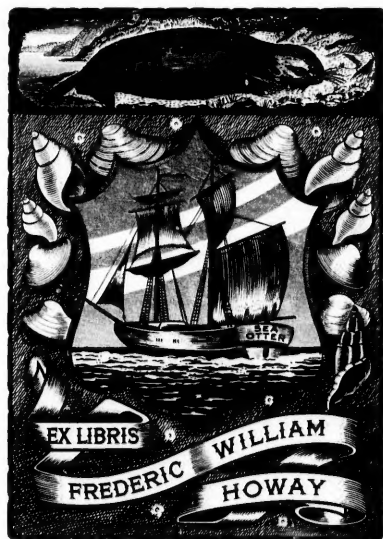


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The First Ascent of Rogers Peak.

BY GEORGE T. LITTLE.

SOME one has rather unkindly remarked that a complete directory of the present and past officials of the Canadian Pacific Railway could be compiled from the names of the peaks along its line. Though admiration for the enterprise of the projectors and managers of this great highway may have had undue influence on the nomenclature of the region, no one who has passed through the magnificent defile in the Selkirks will question the appropriateness of naming both it and the chief mountain on its northern side in honor of the discoverer.¹

¹ Albert B. Rogers, whose indomitable will led, in 1883, to the discovery of a practicable route through the second of the three ranges that separated the settlements of British Columbia from the rest of the Dominion, was born in Orleans, Mass., on May 28, 1829. His boyhood was spent in Maine. He was prepared at Providence, R. I., for the Sheffield Scientific School, was graduated at Yale College as Ph. B. in 1853, and served there a year as assistant in engineering. He was then successively engaged on the enlargement of the Erie Canal, the construction of various lines of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway, the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway, and the Hastings and Dakota Railway. From 1881 to 1885, he was in charge of the Mountain Division of the Canadian Pacific Railway. In consideration of his arduous duties in exploring, and the success that crowned them, he was presented with a purse of \$5000 by the directors in January, 1884. In 1886-87, he was again engaged in seeking a railroad location in Montana and Wyoming. After a long illness, he died 4 May, 1889, at Waterville, Minn., of cancer of the stomach. He was a valued member of the American So-

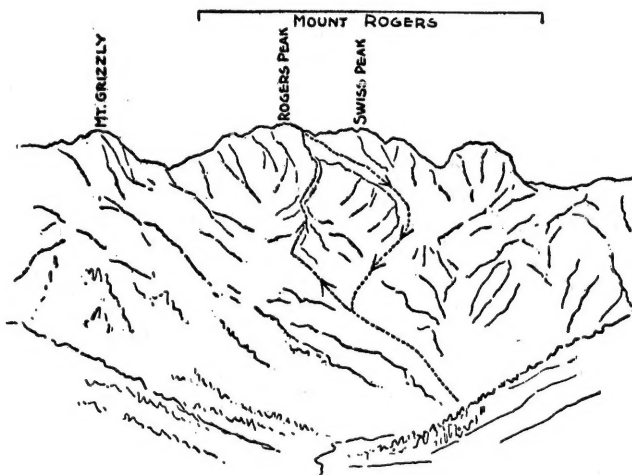
Major Rogers was a railroad engineer. His various explorations within as well as without the United States gained him the title of "Railway Pathfinder." To ascend his peak without at all using his path would be a bad omen. Accordingly, Messrs. P. S. Abbot, C. S. Thompson, and the writer began the climb by stepping upon a hand-car at the Glacier House Thursday morning, July 30, 1896. The first two miles to the summit of the pass were surmounted by the laborious efforts of the Italian section hands, who enjoyed a well earned rest as the car hastened down toward Rogers Pass Station at a rapid rate. Before reaching it, we alighted, for our leader, Mr. Abbot, had chosen a way to the snow-line decidedly to the west of that pursued the previous year. We thus avoided either a large tract of burnt timber or a "face-scratching and skin-scraping scramble" up the bed of the brook.¹

After a brief struggle with the logs and briars of an acre of fallen timber, girt about with devil's-club, there came a long, delightful hour of steady climbing through a typical Selkirk forest. One must experience to understand the pleasing gloom of such a forest on a summer's day. It is lighted by the few rays that find their way between the foliage of the tall pines and spruces, and that of the less lofty deciduous trees which flourish by their side. Occasionally the conifers claim all the ground and cover every depression between the moss-covered ledges and boulders with a thick carpet of needles. Before we reached the tree-line, we crossed the track of the foe of all sylvan beauty, the forest fire, and on passing out of his desolate domain came into that of the avalanche and glacier.

The first formal halt and lunch was at a bit of verdure on the flank of Grizzly, where our course, as marked on the accompanying illustration, turns to the right. Here the flower-ciety of Civil Engineers, and won the title of major in service against the Indians in 1862.

¹ The party of the previous year, composed of Messrs. C. E. Fay, P. S. Abbot, and P. B. Field, entered the woods directly opposite the station, — apparently following the course taken by Herr Carl Sulzer in 1890, — climbed round the spur of Hermit, and met with much burnt timber. After reaching the glacier they were obliged to turn back on account of the illness of one of their number. The opportunity to visit the beautiful waterfall some sixty feet in height, visible from the Glacier House, rewarded their descent by the way of the brook, which was exceedingly rough.

strewn turf, the playground of several sprightly marmots, traversed by numerous rills from a snow-fed brook, formed a striking contrast with the barren rock ridges that lay on either hand, and especially with the shrunken Grizzly glacier, not far beyond, with its irregular moraines, a symbol of lingering death drawing back from the grave it had dug itself. To the south in the foreground extended the Illicilliwaet valley, with the winding railroad and the Glacier House with its lawn, — the only objects to remind one of man and his handiwork. Beyond rose the southward continuation of the snow-covered range of the Selkirks, marked near this end with the sightly spire of Sir Donald, and disappearing in peaks that clustered



in the haze. Here and there the gleam of snow or ice could be traced down a radiating valley, growing more noticeable as the forests of the lower levels closed over it.

Remembering the anemones and columbines, the caltha and painted cup of the grassy resting-place, the novice of the party was astounded ten minutes later to be told that what he supposed must be stains from a wounded marmot was the "red snow" of arctic travellers. Childhood's imagination had made this one of the great wonders of the polar world, and he

momentarily felt a sensation of pride and importance akin to that which comes to him who can claim "farthest north."

The rope was now put on, and the glacier and the adjacent névé were crossed diagonally to a minor arête, marked in Plate XXXV. by the triangular patch of snow lying on its right. Delays incident to the irregular surface of the glacier and to frequent use of the camera — unfortunately the films played a not uncommon trick, and the results were worthless — prevented our reaching this point till nearly noon. The July sun had done its work on a slope exposed, as was this, to its direct rays, and our leader, though disappointed, turned with cheerful determination to the rocks and scree-filled gullies. The slope was broad, and the danger of dislodging loose stones led each to pursue a separate course. Stimulated by the sense of freedom that came with the laying aside of the rope, and not unwilling to show my comrades that I could reach the main ridge as soon as they, I directed my own steps more to the left towards a crag as huge as it was sharp. This rock seemed to me in the direct line of ascent, and would, I believed, afford an unobstructed view of the way. It did reveal a view — but not what I had expected. Once on top, I found that I had devoted fifteen minutes to climbing a "gendarme," standing at an reëntrant angle on the mountain side, and that, in front as well as at my side, was a chasm of several hundred feet. Startled at the nearness and sheerness of the precipice on that side, I henceforth kept more closely to my companions.

After a laborious hour we sat down together on the main arête for a few moments' rest. Swiss Peak was full in view, and across the intervening steep snow slope, the cairn raised on its farthest summit by Herr Sulzer, in 1890, was plainly visible. We had reached this slope above the yawning bergschrund that we had studied with our field glasses on the piazza of the Glacier House and had dreaded as an obstacle. But, on examination, our cautious leader deemed the softness of the snow too suggestive of avalanches to warrant any attempt to plod steadily up the slope to the summit. We must keep to the rocks. The scree had disappeared. The boulders had grown larger and coalesced into ledges tilted at unpleasant and varying angles. At least one place could be called diffi-



HERMIT
VALLEY.

MARION LAKE.

MOUNT ROGERS, HERMIT RANGE, SELKIRKS.

From a photograph by H. G. D.

cult. The only thoroughfare was over a smooth ledge inclining at an angle of sixty degrees and nearly as many feet above the snow. There was no foothold save a transverse crack along its upper side, just beyond one's reach without the help of an ice-axe or a friendly hand. While drawing himself up to this, one of our number was seized with a severe cramp which we for a moment feared might prove to be a strain. It is needless to add that we walked this crack with deliberation. Twice we crawled through or under the great fragments of rock which the giant hands of heat and cold had tumbled one upon another, rather than run the risk of surmounting or flanking them. Three hours of such clambering interrupted by a second lunch and a long rest brought us to the summit.

The sense of fatigue disappeared with the sight that greeted us. We had crossed the rock-rib that joins Rogers Peak to Swiss Peak and justifies Herr Sulzer's use of Mount Rogers as an inclusive term, and were now standing on the snow that covers the crest of the mountain like a thick fold of flesh. Mr. Abbot called me to its northern edge, saying, "Look down and see what I have never seen before in Europe or America." The sight was a wall of snow at least fifteen hundred feet in height that seemed perpendicular¹ as we cautiously peered over. From its base a glacier swept away over an ice fall, marked by huge irregular séracs into the valley beyond.² To us, toiling for hours over blackened rocks, this sudden transformation of the peak into pure untrodden snow rising from a foundation of glistening ice was as startling as it was beautiful.

The haze shut off the distant view to the north and west,

¹ Subsequent measurements with the clinometer, taken at points several rods apart, showed that the snow wall had a slope of fifty-four degrees. Parallel with a lower rock ridge, and perhaps forty feet from the edge of the wall, ran a fissure through the undulating snow and ice of the summit. This circumstance led us to surmise that under the favoring circumstances of a long warm summer, this crack, now insignificant as to width, might develop into a bergschrund of no slight proportions.

² It will be found, I think, that we were overlooking the valley of Mountain Creek. At any rate, the following day as we crossed that stream, the fireman of the locomotive remarked, "Prospectors have been up that valley and have come out at Ross Peak," apparently showing that there is an easy pass across the range probably to the north and west of Mt. Cheops. An alpine problem presenting some difficulties would be the crossing of the range between Rogers Peak and Grizzly. C. S. T.

but as far as the eye could reach, sharp rock ridges peering through the mantle of snow contrasted with the forest-clad valley of the Illicilliwaet, so prominent in the other direction. Near at hand rose the northern face of Grizzly, from this point a perfect cone of gray ice unspotted with rock. The moment of disappointment came when the aneroid barometer was consulted. In his sketch map¹ of this region Herr Sulzer estimates our peak to be ten metres higher than Sir Donald. We hoped for this amount of evidence that in point of altitude we had surpassed the Swiss party's brilliant ascents in the Selkirks. Despite a vigorous shaking our instrument stood fast at 10,300 feet.² We were beneath rather than above the summit of the American Matterhorn. The hour, five o'clock, forbade a long stay on the summit, and the absence of material prevented the erection of a cairn to celebrate our ascent.

The first half of the descent proved as easy as the last half of the ascent had been difficult. The condition of the snow slope on the southeast had changed with the withdrawal of the sun's rays. Our leader now considered it a safe highway. A royal one it was. Its surface yielded sufficiently to enable one to press a firm foothold, and its inclination at an angle of forty degrees made all other exertion unnecessary. To stand erect on a slope like this, and thus secure the firmer footing, is a hard lesson for a novice to learn. The writer vividly remembers the frequent exhortation from his friend in the rear, "Don't lean in, jam your heel down."³ But confidence in the ice-axe, in the rope, and most of all in one's comrades, is of rapid growth. By the time we reached the bergschrund, the tyro was quite ready to assent to the proposal to cross it in the "pleasant way" described by Professor Tyndall in his chapter on the "Accident on the Piz Morteratsch." Fortunately, his ignorance, though great, was surpassed by the wisdom of his

¹ Jahrbuch des Schweizer Alpen Club, 1890-1891, page 264.

² The aneroid, however, was slightly depressed that day, recording the elevation of the Glacier House a few feet lower than at other times. It may be added that the instrument responded well to that crucial test of an aneroid, ability to return promptly to the proper point on descending.

³ The friend behind wishes to bear witness here that he considered Little, under the circumstances, a remarkably upright man. Not until we glissaded was it apparent what a remarkable backslider he could become. C. S. T.

fellows. A subsequent glance at the chasm from the lower side made us all content that the experiment of tobogganing across it was not tried. A considerable traverse, however, was necessary before we found a place where a long step brought us upon an icy ridge projecting from the lower side. This was covered with snow and so narrow that our leader insisted that we cross in horseback posture, working our bodies along a few inches at a time. Once beyond the schrund, the slope lessened, and, between running and glissading, seven o'clock found us in the amphitheatre formed by projecting ridges from Rogers and Swiss peaks.

Words cannot describe the glory of the scene we witnessed here. The day, which had not been especially fine, was ending with a gorgeous sunset. Its brilliant hues not only lit up the sky, but so poured over the snowy flank of Mt. Grizzly, that one could hardly say where earth ended and the heavens began. They played among the fantastic towers and minarets of Mt. Hermit, intensifying their nearness and exaggerating their odd shapes. Later came the afterglow, and the snow cornice on Grizzly gleamed like a monster reef all of pinkest coral. I agree with my companion Thompson: "It was literally more than supermundane, suggesting the jasper walls and golden streets of the apostle's vision."

The large crevasses that mark the turn and fall of the Rogers glacier into the valley were all well bridged. They were safely passed, and, though the light was now waning, after a few moments' examination of the channels in the snow, Mr. Abbot authorized a glissade of several hundred feet. It was a delightful coast, but the consistency of the snow demanded the sitting rather than the standing posture. As a result, long after we unroped minute glacial rivulets continued to flow down our limbs to their haven in our shoes.

It was nearly ten o'clock¹ before we had crossed the depres-

¹ The last three hundred yards before reaching the railway were weird beyond description. We were in a maze of fallen trees, log piled on log, jackstraw-wise; underfoot, bog, running brook, and boulder; overhead, dense boughs of fir and spruce; around us, alders, devil's-club, and all the impediments of a Selkirk thicket. The moon crept over the top of Mt. Macdonald and spotted our wretched darkness with a distorted light. We were travellers struggling through an African jungle, adventurers seeking the palace of the sleeping beauty. C. S. T.

sion cut with glacial streams and dike-like ridges, and plunged into the woods on the other side. The next four hours are not pleasant to recall. In a Selkirk forest the delicious gloom of the forenoon becomes Egyptian darkness at night. A chance remark from the novice that he would catch his death-cold, if he lay down to slumber with soaking feet, led our uncomplaining leader, who, unknown to us, was suffering from severe nausea, to abandon the thought of a bivouac, and to continue to pilot us down the mountain side, with frequent halts, but without the slightest mishap. A second battle with that abominable piece of fallen timber, a brief lounge on the station platform, the long four miles on the railroad, and then came the welcome sight of the Glacier House just as the eastern sky was brightening into a new day.

Per Aspera ad Astra.

PHILIP S. ABBOT.

Died August 3, 1896.

EASY and swift was the rough way to thee,
Dear boy, whose bright face to our older eyes
Seemed full of radiant dawning and sunrise,
Promise and pledge of a fair day to be;
Up the steep, icy slopes thy footsteps sped,
Which never foot had trodden before but thine,
And then, — obedient to some heavenly sign,
Some word of power which might not be gainsaid,
With hope undimmed, and eyes that knew no stain
Of tears, or shadow of remembered sin,
But glowed and shone from the brave heart within, —
Thou, without hesitance, or fear, or pain,
From off the mountain tops of thy desire
Leaped to the starward pathway and went higher.

SUSAN COOLIDGE.

